LTVA receives grant from Nevada tourism agency

Nearly $1 million in grants to boost tourism to rural Nevada was awarded by the Nevada Commission on Tourism this month.

Among the funded projects: the Comstock ATV Jamboree, a first-time special event in Dayton; Operation Sierra Storm, a Tahoe-area event geared to meteorologists who influence visitor travel; and the REMAX World Long Drive Championship in Mesquite.

Following is a sample of grant awards:

$8,000 to the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority to help bring back Operation Sierra Storm, a meteorology conference and seminar. Grant funding will offset some of the event costs.

$8,000 to the Dayton Valley Events Center/Lyon Country to promote a first-time special event, the Comstock ATV Jamboree. Grant money will be used to promote the event in print, online and broadcast media.

$5,000 to the city of Mesquite's Athletics & Leisure Services department to offset costs to produce and show TV spots aired during the Golf Channel's national broadcast of the RE/MAX World Long Drive Championship.

$15,000 to the city of Carlin to expand television and radio advertising to promote three of the city's summer events.

$7,000 to the Walker River Paiute Tribe to offset costs of a marketing campaign that will include promotional literature, new photography and signage.

$40,000 to Nevada Silver Trails – a nonprofit group that promotes travel to Southern Nevada, excluding the Las Vegas area – for 10 different radio advertising campaigns promoting

special events in the Nevada Silver Trails region.

Grants are given to nonprofit entities, which in turn must provide a 50-50 match in funds or volunteer hours. NCOT reimburses applicants after the projects are completed and labor and funding details are documented.

NCOT, which receives three-eighths of 1 percent of room tax revenue as its operating budget, uses a part of its funds to offer the Rural Grants Program, which helps nonprofit groups and government agencies in rural Nevada enhance visitation and boost revenue from overnight stays.

NCOT awarded 145 grants in June for a total of $971,188.

Opinion: Online gaming is bad for society

By Sheldon Adelson

“Click your mouse and lose your house” isn’t a marketing slogan for advocates of legalized online gambling. But it should be.

Right now, several state legislatures, including the populous states of California and Pennsylvania, are considering proposals to allow the legalization of online gaming. Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware have already approved it. Congress is also interested in the issue as multiple pieces of legislation, both limiting and expanding online gaming, have recently been introduced.

As an industry leader, and more important as a father, grandfather, citizen and patriot of this great country, I am

adamantly opposed to the legalization and proliferation of online casino gaming.



Sheldon
Adelson

You would think the chairman of the world's largest gaming company would pursue any aspect of gaming which could increase profits, right?

Ordinarily that is true – but online gambling is "fools' gold."

Whether it is full casino gaming, poker only, or anything in between – this is a societal train wreck waiting to happen.

With the expansion of Internet gaming now taking place at the state level, I strongly urge Congress to either rewrite the Federal Wire Act, or pass new legislation making internet gaming illegal nationwide.

Additionally, I encourage greater enforcement of the laws currently prohibiting off-shore Internet gaming companies from engaging in transactions with U.S. citizens.

Critics will claim I have ulterior motives in taking such a strong stand on this issue. They'll say I'm just afraid to compete for this business or that I'm worried about the impact on my land-based casinos in Nevada and Pennsylvania.

First, with our popular brands – like the Venetian – we would be very effective competitors in this market place. Having started more than 50 different successful businesses over the

course of my nearly seven decades- long business career, I’m not afraid of competing with anyone.

Second, our company makes twice as much money from our non-gaming attractions in the United States than we do from our casino operations. Finally, almost all our casino profits come from Asia, where online gambling doesn’t exist and won’t be legalized soon, if ever.

So while the impact on my company’s business would be limited, the hit on other commercial casinos, Native American casinos, and racetrack-casinos across the land could be substantial and even lead to their eventual demise.

Recent research from a number of European countries shows that the proliferation of internet gaming has, as a start, resulted in a 20 percent decrease in visitation to the land-based casinos in those countries. That number is bound to worsen as internet gaming dependency grows.

The research also shows that over the past 10 years internet gambling revenue in Europe has gone up on average 26 to 28 percent. Meanwhile, land-based casino revenue has been flat or even contracted during that same period of time, even though it was expected to increase at 5 to 10 percent per year.

In short, the rise of Internet gaming has clearly come at the cost of land-based casinos in Europe.

What does that information foretell for us here in the United States? To begin with, a loss of 200,000 direct gaming industry jobs and additional 200,000 lost indirect and induced jobs. That’s 400, 000 lost jobs in casino-hosting cities across America.

On top of the negative economic impact, the plague it could bring to our society is even more far-reaching.

Online gambling makes it possible for bets to be placed by

anyone at any time. When gambling is available in every bedroom, every dorm room and every office space, there will be no way to fully determine that each wager has been placed in a rational and consensual manner.

For example, the possibility of underage children finding ways to place online wagers and the possibility of people betting under the influence of drugs or being coerced are all scenarios that can happen when the person is only monitored by their own computer screen.

On the other hand, when a person makes an effort to get dressed, join some friends and head to the local casino for a night of entertainment they must show themselves as adults, and their behavior can be observed and ultimately managed by security and other staff if needed.

Let’s also focus here on the impact of online gambling on children and young adults.

As a father of two teenage boys, I’m well aware that we now live in an age where many kids are already dangerously addicted to Internet games.

What started with arcade games, like Pac-man 30 years ago, has now morphed into an environment where kids’ formative years are spent immersed in tablets, smart phones, home video games and other portable electronic devices.

Let me quote some important words from gaming counselor Liz Woolley who established Online Gamers Anonymous. In a letter to the BBC, she wrote:

“For some, the enjoyment turns to suffering when they become ‘addicted’ to the games. They no longer have the ‘choice’ to play, but are driven to play….”

After spending so many years playing addictive Internet games, kids and young adults today have been primed for the pump, and

online gambling advocates know there’s a lot of money to be made from exploiting them.

To make matters worse, young adults in America are also suffering under nearly a trillion dollars in student loans. To tempt them to solve their financial problems with a click of the mouse is unconscionable.

So, no, online gambling is not a threat to my business.

It’s a threat to our society – a toxin which all good people ought to resist.

Sheldon Adelson is chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands, the largest gaming company in the world. This first appeared in Forbes.

Squaw to turn village into blues arena

Bluesdays returns to the Village at Squaw Valley with free concerts by some of the country and region’s best blues acts.

Concerts are every Tuesday evening in July and August.

Performances in the Village Events Plaza are from 6-8:30pm.

Featured blues acts for summer 2013 include:

July 2 – Chris Cain

July 19 – Mark Hummel and The Blues Survivors featuring Little Charlie Baty

July 16 – David Jacobs Strain & The Crunk Mountain Boys

July 23 – Janiva Magness

July 30 – Tinsley Ellis

Aug. 6 – Jimmy Thackery & The Drivers

Aug. 13 – Albert Castiglia

Aug. 20- Studebaker John

Aug. 27- Bluesdays Finale with Nikki Hill.

Youngsters receive free introduction to tennis



Rob Wheatley works on a volley drill with a youngster. Photo/Provided

More than 20 youngsters participated in a two-day free tennis clinic at Zephyr Cove Park.

The June 15-16 event was put on by Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department, Hersh Herschman of Tahoe Tennis Classic, Rob Wheatley of Zephyr Cove Tennis Club and sponsored by Capisce restaurant.

Each session consisted of 90 minutes of instruction from Herschman and Wheatley, along with volunteers from the Zephyr Cove tennis community.

The participants were treated to pizza each day from Capisce.

Every participant also received tennis gifts from the USTA.

Some of the attendees included: Ava Campbell, Zachary Brooks, Cameron Brooks, Dana Merriam, Reagan Merriam, Dylan Demicheal, Christian Demicheal, Emmett Allen, Jaelen Allen, Lori Ramm, Charlie Ramm, David Ramm, Isaiah Abel, Makenna Abel, Sequoya Fillmore, Trent Fillmore, Jaralyn Plympton, Juliah Schultz, Machenzie Nealis, Maureen Brennan, Moorea Davision, Breck Nealis, and Lily Johnson.

Adult volunteers included Derek Barraclough, Ross Rittiman, Holly Rittiman, Adam Matzkin, Jeff Hayes, John Gianotti, Carolyn Wright, Suzi Allione, Kathy Wharton and Neil Trebotich.

Mammoth Mountain on quest to reinvent itself

By Aleksandra Gajewski, Mammoth Times

Mammoth Mountain Ski Area Chairman and CEO Rusty Gregory introduced the company's new executive management officials last week. With that announcement, he also launched the company's strategic plan to move forward on what he said was "Mammoth 3.0—catching the third wave."

Gregory said again that he will remain as the CEO of the company and the new leadership team will report to him.

The management team consists of Greg Dallas as chief operating officer of Mammoth and June Mountain Ski Areas; Erik Forsell as chief marketing officer; Mark Clausen as chief financial officer; and Ron Cohen as chief administrative officer.

A fifth officer, yet to be determined, will act as chief operating officer of hospitality.

With the new management team, Gregory hopes to go from a defensive attitude into an offensive one.

“We were doing the right thing playing defense,” Gregory said. “But a new wave of opportunity is building.”

In launching “Mammoth 3.0,” Gregory said he and his team will focus on key strategies to market the ski area as “Southern California’s Mountain Home.”

In achieving this rebranding, the executive management team and their respective departments will adopt a series of new (and some not so new) strategies.

The overall strategy will consist of five main objectives: to become the loudest and most active voice of any mountain resort community in the Southern California marketplace; to curate social experience and heighten social engagement; to focus on excellent service throughout each department; to maintain a rewarding and fun working environment; and to re-establish financial strength and stability.

Gregory said he is removing himself from day-to-day operations and will focus “exclusively on attracting investment capitol.”

He said his focus will be on finding financial strength, stability, and paying off the remaining debt.

“We actually don’t have too much debt, we just don’t have enough operating income,” he said. “This is the area I’m focusing on.”

He said he wants to find investments that pay dividends back so he can have money for more investment into the company.

“We are not selling the company,” Gregory said. “Some day, Barry [Sternlicht] will sell his interest – that’s what private equity does.

“By the way, that’s what all ownership does. Dave McCoy sold his interest in the company. Took him 60 years … and he deserved the big dollars he got out of it. Barry Sternlicht will deserve the value that we could create for him because we were able to use his investment in the company and we need to attract different investments.

“I have a proposal on my desk from a big, institutional company to give us $350 million. That would pay off all of our debt, leaving us something around $150 million to invest.

“Now, I’m not saying that I have finalized that deal, or that we want the terms of that deal, but that is what I’m doing.”

Gregory reflected on the ski area’s history and divided it up into parts (Mammoth 1.0 and 2.0). He reflected on the ups and downs in each time period, focusing on the last seven years.

After what he called Mammoth’s “best year (2005-06), the ski area, along with the town, experienced seven challenging years, each year bringing a new set (or a combined set) of unique obstacles.

“The last seven years have presented us with a series of hardships; drought, lawsuits, town bankruptcy, and global financial meltdown, and the ensuing recession have left their mark on all of us,” Gregory said.

Despite Mammoth Mountain paying off $50 million in debt, investing $70 million in capital, introducing air service (with seven flights a day at its peak), among other things, the morale of the mountain, the town of Mammoth Lakes, and the

community as a whole was at an all-time low, he said.

“We feel like we hit the bottom,” Gregory said.

Why? According to Gregory, it’s because the community has been on the defense.

“This whole sentiment, this whole notion of playing defense comes from facing the challenges of shrinking resources and the hardships that we faced over the last seven years.

“It’s a natural human experience, intensified by a small, rural community that we’re in with a fragile economy, and by the politics that come from [living in a small town.]

“All of that pervades our existence.”

Fire restrictions set for Lake Tahoe Basin

Beginning July 1, fire restrictions will go into effect in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Campfires and charcoal barbecues will be restricted to designated recreation sites, and other fire-related activities will be prohibited until the end of fire season.

“Weather patterns this winter and spring are similar to conditions in 2007, the year of the Angora Fire,” Fire Prevention Officer Beth Brady said in a statement. “Even with the rain we have received, at this point, it won’t alleviate this summer’s high risk of wildfires.”

During fire restrictions, certain activities are not allowed.

Prohibited activities include: building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, or stove fire except within the stoves and fire rings provided in designated recreation sites; smoking on National Forest land, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, or within a designated recreation site; welding, or operating an acetylene or other torch with an open flame; and operating or using any internal or external combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly installed and maintained in effective working order.

Fire restrictions are intended to reduce the possibility of human-caused wildfires over the summer season.

Campfires are prohibited in all semi-developed sites such as Luther Pass, Blackwood Canyon, and Watson Lake, as well as in all dispersed recreation locations, such as the Meiss backcountry area on Luther Pass.

Forest users should obtain specific information about restrictions and the area they are visiting before venturing out.

For additional information regarding fire restrictions, call (530) 543.2694.

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3 El Dorado County women face federal fraud charges

Three El Dorado County women were indicted Tuesday on federal fraud charges.

Teresa Marie Marty of Pollock Pines, Rebecca Bandera-Marty of Shingle Springs, and Pamela Harris of Placerville face charges

of conspiring to defraud the Internal Revenue Service. In addition to the conspiracy count, Marty is charged with 33 counts of false claims against the United States, and Bandera-Marty is also charged in 16 of these counts.

According to the indictment, in 2008 and 2009 the women filed at least 250 false individual federal income tax returns claiming more than $60 million in false federal income tax refunds for clients in 26 states. In response to the false returns, the IRS erroneously issued more than 40 tax refunds, totaling more than $8 million, including a false refund for $277,832 for Marty's tax return.

Marty owned the tax preparation business Advanced Financial Services in Placerville. Bandera-Marty is her daughter-in-law. Both were licensed tax preparers. Harris was their office manager.

If convicted, Marty, Bandera-Marty, and Harris each face up to 10 years in prison for the conspiracy charge. Marty and Bandera-Marty also face up to five years in prison for each false claim charge.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Feds spend more on cleanup than preparing for disasters

By Neela Banerjee, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – Federal spending on community preparedness for extreme weather events is a fraction of the amount paid to clean up damage from storms, tornadoes and drought, according

to an analysis of federal data.

The report by the Center for American Progress, a left-leaning Washington think tank, estimated that from 2011 to 2013 the federal government spent about $136 billion on weather-related disaster relief and recovery, compared with $22.4 billion on 43 preparedness programs.

A growing body of climate science indicates that the warming atmosphere increases the likelihood of extreme weather-related events. In January, the draft National Climate Assessment, issued every four years by a federal advisory group, predicted more of the heavier rains in the Northeast, Midwest and Plains that have overwhelmed storm drains and led to flooding and erosion; sea level rise that has battered coastal communities around the United States; and drought that has turned much of the West into a tinderbox.

Some states and localities have launched their own efforts to reduce the impact of weather-related disasters. This month, New York City announced a $20-billion plan to protect against severe storms, including protecting the shoreline, buildings and the electricity infrastructure. Forty-five localities including Atlanta, El Paso and Dubuque, Iowa, launched Resilient Communities for America, in which they share practices and resources to better adapt to such disasters.

New York and New Jersey will be able to rely in great part on federal disaster funds allocated after Superstorm Sandy. But other places have to scramble for much of their funding, local leaders and the Center for American Progress say.

Preparing for disasters is costly, the report notes. For instance, the town of Edna, Texas, built a hurricane shelter big enough to protect its 5,500 residents from 300-mph winds. The project cost $2.5 million, 75% of it provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which plans to invest about $680 million to build similar facilities in 18 other

states.

The report found that of the $22.4 billion set aside for 43 federal programs aimed at building disaster resiliency, $12 billion went to Agriculture Department programs that foster sustainable agriculture and protect water resources from drought and floods. The remainder went to departments including Defense, Commerce, Homeland Security and Interior.

Funding for two Interior Department wildfire management efforts were cut for fiscal years 2011 through 2013. The study found that during those years funding for preparedness programs not in the Agriculture Department fell about $160 million.

The report recommends that a comprehensive assessment be undertaken to get a picture of local preparedness needs. It also recommends that a dedicated fund be created to support community resiliency projects, financed by a small increase in the royalty rate that companies pay for extracting fossil fuels from federal lands and waters.

Series of classes focuses on gardening

The Green Thumb Workshop Series starts today with a talk about “Food Gardening 101” featuring Christy Daugherty, formerly from the U.S. Forest Service and now part of the Lake Tahoe Master Gardeners.

For people who are interested in making their landscape a little more productive, this is a talk to go to. Learn how to start from seeds and end the season with a bushel of fresh

fruits and veggies.

Bring your gardening questions and concerns to the UC Tahoe City Field Station (2400 Lake Forest, just east of Tahoe City) from 5:30-6:30pm.

Additional Green Thumb Workshops include:

July 9: Right Plant-Right Place

July 16: Pest Management-What's Bugging You?

July 23: Composting From Garbage to Garden

July 30: Get Wild in Your Garden

Aug. 6: Sprinkle or Shower? Efficient Irrigation

Aug. 20: The Dirt on Your Garden Soil.

Oven fire at Red Hut causes minor damage

The original Red Hut in South Lake Tahoe is shut for the day.

An early morning blaze on Tuesday started in one of the ovens. Firefighters said flames were as high as 5 feet at times.

An employee of the restaurant on Lake Tahoe Boulevard told *Lake Tahoe News* they hope to be open on Wednesday. It will depend what inspectors say.

Workers were busy cleaning up the mess left from fire extinguishers.

The fire was reported about 5:30am June 25.

Minimal damage was caused by the fire and no injuries were reported.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report